

Message Text

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AMCONSUL QUEBEC

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTREAL 1125

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SUBJ: ENGLISH IN THE BOARD ROOM - FRENCH IN THE HALLS

REF: MONTREAL 1093, QUEBEC 0253

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE ARE TWO FACETS OF QUEBEC LANGUAGE DISPUTE AS IT RELATES TO ECONOMIC SECTOR. FIRST IS FRANCO-PHONE DRIVE FOR EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. SECOND IS USE OF FRENCH IN BUSINESS POWER CENTERS. IN ECONOMIC TERMS, FRANCOPHONES HAVE PROGRESSED RELATIVE TO ANGLOPHONES. BUT BY COMPARISON, PROGRESS IN USE OF FRENCH BY TOP MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN SLOW. THIS LAG APPEARS TO BE MAJOR IRRITANT COLORING DR. LAURIN'S PERSPECTIVE AND BEARING ON HIS APPARENT CONVICTION THAT LEGISLATION IS ONLY MEANS OF REDRESSING IMBALANCE. WHILE BUSINESS IS INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE FRENCH FACT, WE EXPECT DICHOTOMY TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME. A GREATER NUMBER OF FRANCOPHONE WILL BE MOVED INTO TOP MANAGEMENT, BUT SINCE MONTREAL'S LARGEST CORPORATIONS ARE NATIONALLY OR INTERNATIONALLY ORIENTED, ANGLOPHONES IN MOST CASES WILL CONTINUE TO WIELD BALANCE OF POWER AND ENGLISH WILL BE MOST COMMON LANGUAGE OF INTERNAL DECISION MAKING. FAILURE
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OF PQ TO RECOGNIZE THIS REALITY, A POSSIBILITY WE ARE NOT WILLING TO DISMISS IN VIEW OF APPARENT STRENGTH OF LINGUISTIC HARD LINERS, WILL LEAD TO MOVEMENT OF AT LEAST SOME HEAD OFFICES AND ATTENDANT ADVERSE ECONOMIC EFFECTS IN PROVINCE. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE ARE TWO MAJOR ASPECTS TO THE QUEBEC LANGUAGE ISSUE. WHILE PQ LEADERS TALK IN TERMS OF ANGLOPHONE CULTURAL DOMINATION

AND COMMANDING ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN ECONOMIC POWER CENTERS, MAJOR CAUSE OF AVERAGE FRANCOPHONE'S RESENTMENT IN MONTREAL IS PERCEIVED INEQUALITY IN JOB OPPORTUNITIES. WHILE OBJECTIVES OF "FRANCIZATION" OF FIRMS, IN MORE LIMITED SENSE AS IT APPLIES ONLY TO LANGUAGE, COULD BE MET BY BI-LINGUAL ANGLOPHONES OPERATING IN FRENCH, COLLATERAL CONCERN OF FRANCOPHONES FOR FAIR SHARE OF ECONOMIC PIE CAN BE MET ONLY BY MOVING MARKEDLY GREATER NUMBER OF FRENCH QUEBECKERS INTO HIGHER ECHELON POSITIONS. EXTENT TO WHICH THIS MOVEMENT IS TAKING PLACE IS MAJOR ISSUE OF DISPUTE BETWEEN MONTREAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND PQ GOVERNMENT.

FRENCH QUEBECKERS HAVE MADE ECONOMIC PROGRESS

2. A STUDY RELEASED DURING LAST WEEK BY MONTREAL BOARD OF TRADE ADVANCES FIGURES TO PROVE THAT FRANCOPHONES HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN MOVING UP EXECUTIVE LADDER DURING LAST 10 YEARS. ACCORDING TO BOARD OF TRADE STUDY, NUMBER OF FRANCOPHONES IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN MONTREAL HAS INCREASED BY 89 O/O SINCE 1967. WITH 479 OF BOARD'S 2,900 MEMBER FIRMS PARTICIPATING IN SURVEY, RETURNS SHOWED THAT FRANCOPHONES NOW MAKE UP 59 O/O OF MANAGEMENT IN THESE FIRMS, COMPARED TO 37 O/O IN 1967.

3. AN EARLIER STUDY CARRIED OUT BY BOARD OF TRADE ON HEAD OFFICES ONLY INDICATED THAT FRENCH QUEBECKERS HAD INCREASED THEIR SHARE OF TOP MANAGEMENT JOBS FROM 19 O/O TO 31 O/O DURING LAST 10 YEARS, WHILE THEIR SHARE OF MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AND FIRST LINE SUPERVISORY UNCLASSIFIED

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POSITIONS HAD INCREASED FROM 25 TO 39 O/O AND 35 TO 51 O/O, RESPECTIVELY. IF ADDITIONAL FIGURES ARE NEEDED TO CONVINCE FRANCO-PHONES THAT THEIR LOT IS IMPROVING, SEVERAL RECENT STUDIES PURPORT TO PROVE THAT AVERAGE INCOMES OF FRENCH QUEBECKERS-NOT JUST MANAGEMENT-HAVE INCREASE AT FASTER RATE THAN INCOMES OF ANGLOPHONES. RECENT STUDY BASED ON 1971 CENSUS FIGURES AND CARRIED OUT BY UNIVERSITY OF MONTREAL ECONOMIST SHOWS THAT IN 1970 PERSONS OF BRITISH ORIGIN EARNED 31.6 O/O MORE THAN PERSONS OF FRENCH ORIGIN, WHILE DISPARITY IN 1960 WAS 55.1 O/O. ANOTHER STUDY BASED ON SAME CENSUS DATA, UNDERTAKEN BY ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF CANADA, REPORTS THAT INCOME OF FRENCH MALES INCREASED BY 70.6 O/O BETWEEN 1961 AND 1971, WHILE DURING SAME PERIOD INCOME OF MALES OF BRITISH ORIGIN INCREASED BY ONLY 47.2 O/O. PRESUMABLY, FURTHER PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING SIX YEARS SINCE LAST CENSUS.

DESPITE ECONOMIC PROGRESS THERE IS STILL DISCONTENT

4. BUSINESS COMMUNITY LOOKS ON THESE FIGURES AS BEARING PROOF THAT CHANGE OF HEART HAS OCCURRED AND THAT BUSINESS SECTOR IS BEGINNING TO REFLECT ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF QUEBEC DEMOGRAPHY. FIGURES ARE IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT CONTENTION THAT CHANGE HAS OCCURRED VOLUNTARILY AND THAT GOVERNMENT COERCION IS NOT NECES-

SARY. BUT REACTION OF PQ HAS GENERALLY BEEN TO GIVE SHORT SHRIFT TO ARGUMENTS OF BUSINESS COMMUNITY. AS PREMISE, PQ WHITE PAPER ON LANGUAGE POLICY STATED THAT FRENCH IS LARGELY THE LANGUAGE OF HUMBLE JOBS AND OF POOR INCOME. WHILE FRANCOPHONES MAY RECOGNIZE THAT DISPARITY WITH ANGLOPHONE EARNING POWER HAS BEEN REDUCED, MOST QUESTION WHY THERE SHOULD NOW BE ANY DISPARITY AT ALL. AS FOR DR. LAURIN, HE IS KNOWN TO CONSIDER FRENCH PRESENCE IN CORPORATE HIERARCHY AS LITTLE MORE THAN TOKENISM.

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5. WHILE NOT ALL FRANCOPHONES ENDORSE DR. LAURIN'S METHODS, MOST SHARE HIS BELIEF THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. ALMOST ANY FRANCOPHONE CAN RECOUNT REAL OR IMAGINED INJUSTICES AT HANDS OF ANGLOPHONE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. WORST EXTREME IS PRESENTED BY YVON CHARBONNEAU, PRESIDENT OF QUEBEC TEACHER'S UNION, WHO TOLD QUEBEC'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LAST WEEK THAT, BI-LINGUAL OR OTHERWISE, THE FRANCOPHONE QUEBECKER HAS NO ACCESS TO BETTER INCOMES.

USE OF FRENCH LANGUAGE HAS LAGGED ECONOMIC PROGRESS

6. IN TERMS OF PROGRESS, AND LEAVING POLITICAL RHETORIC ASIDE, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT FRANCOPHONES HAVE IMPROVED THEIR ECONOMIC POSITION VIS A VIS ANGLOPHONES IN QUEBEC. IF ONE LOOKS AT OTHER ISSUE IN QUEBEC LANGUAGE DISPUTE - THE ACTUAL USE OF FRENCH AS LANGUAGES OF BUSINESS, PARTICULARLY IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN LARGE CORPORATIONS - THE DEGREE OF PROGRESS IS CONSIDERABLY LESS. MAURICE SAUVE, VICE PRESIDENT OF CONSOLIDATED BATHURST, AND MEMBER OF RECNET LANGUAGE MISSION TO EUROPE (MONTREAL REFTL)

POINTED OUT LAST YEAR THAT OUT OF 104 COMPANIES IN QUEBEC WITH MORE THAN 1000 EMPLOYEES, 91 OF THEM CONDUCT MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS IN ENGLISH. AND 43 OF THE ENGLISH COMPANIES HAD NO UNCLASSIFIED

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FRENCH-SPEAKING TOP EXECUTIVES.

7. SIMILARLY, TESTIMONY BY PRESIDENT OF MONTREAL-BASED ROYAL BANK BEFORE QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LANGUAGE COMMITTEE LAST WEEK ALSO DID LITTLE TO ADVANCE POSITION OF BUSINESS COMMUNITY. A BRIEF SUBMITTED AT THAT TIME SHOWED THAT ONLY 5 OUT OF 85 TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN HEAD OFFICE WERE HELD BY FRANCOPHONES, THAT ONLY 18 O/O OF PERSONNEL IN 1200 HIGH LEVEL POSITIONS SPOKE FRENCH FLUENTLY, AND THAT OF BANKS 47 DIRECTORS, 15 WERE QUEBECKERS, OF WHOM ONLY FOUR WERE FRANCOPHONES.

CHANGE AT TOP LEVELS WILL BE SLOW

8. WHILE WE CANNOT CORROBORATE SAUVE'S FIGURES, THEY DO NOT APPEAR SURPRISING BASED ON OUR OWN KNOWLEDGE OF MONTREAL CORPORATIONS. THUS, DESPITE FRANCOPHONE ECONOMIC PROGRESS, DR. LAURIN, STILL HAS GOOD - ALBEIT QUIXOTIC - TARGET AT WHICH TO SHOOT. WHEN IT COMES TO MAJOR ECONOMIC POLICY AND BASIC DECISIONS BEARING ON QUEBEC'S ECONOMIC WELL-BEING, ENGLISH IS STILL LANGUAGE OF COMMAND. WHAT IS NOT DISCOURAGING FOR LINGUISTIC NATIONALIST SUCH AS LAURIN, AND REASON FOR HIS APPARENT COMMITMENT TO HEAVY DOSE OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITARIANISM, IS THAT SITUATION IS NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE GREAT DEAL OVER NEAR FUTURE. EVEN ASSUMING BEST OF INTENTIONS ON PART OF BUSINESS COMMUNITY, IT IS HARD TO ENVISAGE SITUATION WHERE MANAGEMENT OF NATIONALLY BASED FIRMS, WHO HAPPEN TO BE HEADQUARTERED IN MONTREAL, WOULD USE FRENCH AS NORMAL LANGUAGE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION. AS RECOMMENDED BY LANGUAGE STUDY MISSION, ONLY SURE WAY OF PROMOTING USE OF FRENCH IN HIGHEST LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT IS THROUGH ADVANCEMENT OF FRANCOPHONE EXECUTIVE CADRE. TO MANY FIRMS, HOWEVER, WHO DO NO MORE THAN 15-20 O/O OF THEIR BUSINESS IN QUEBEC, THIS WILL APPEAR TO BE CASE OF TAIL WAGGING THE DOG, AND UNREALISTIC DEMANDS FOR SHARING OF POWER. WE WOULD THUS ANTICIPATE SOME- UNCLASSIFIED

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WHAT ANOMALOUS SITUATION WHERE FRANCOPHONE EARNINGS CONTINUE TO RISE, WHERE GREATER NUMBER OF FRANCOPHONES ARE MOVED INTO HIGHER POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY, BUT WHERE ANGLOPHONES CONTINUE TO WIELD BALANCE OF POWER AND ENGLISH IS LANGUAGE OF INTERNAL MANAGEMENT USE.

ECONOMIC RATIONALE MAY NOT BE DETERMINANT

9. IF CULTURAL NATIONALISTS REMAIN RIGID IN FACE OF "THE ENGLISH REALITY" THERE ARE NUMBER OF FIRMS WHO UNDOUBTEDLY WILL TRANSFER HEAD OFFICES OUT OF QUEBEC. PRESENT POSITION OF PQ, AS SUGGESTED IN QUEBEC REFTEL, MAY REQUIRE USE OF FRENCH FOR ALL INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS. WE BELIEVE MORE REALISTIC RESPONSE OVER PERIOD OF TIME WOULD BE ACCOMMODATION BY GOVERNMENT TO REALITY THAT ENGLISH WILL CONTINUE TO BE SPOKEN INTERNALLY IN MANY HEAD OFFICES, AS NATURAL LANGUAGE OF MANAGEMENT. IN THIS CASE, GOVERNMENT GOALS COULD BE SATISFIED BY SEEING USE OF FRENCH INCREASE, AS MORE FRANCOPHONES MOVE INTO TOP POSITIONS AND AS ANGLOPHONE MANAGEMENT BECOMES MORE COMFORTABLE WITH FRENCH, AND BY ENSURING MAXIMUM USE OF FRENCH FROM BOTTOM UP. WHILE THIS FALLS SHORT OF DR. LAURIN'S GOALS OF OBTAINING PRIMACY, OR EVEN PRIMUS INTER PARES FOR FRENCH AS NORMAL LANGUAGE OF MANAGEMENT, ANY TARGET EXCEEDING ABOVE LIMITS COULD BE ACHIEVED ONLY AT COST OF DIMINISHED CORPORATE PRESENCE IN MONTREAL AND ECONOMIC WELL BEING OF PROVINCE.

10. PREDICTION BASED ON ECONOMIC RATIONALE WOULD SUGGEST THAT ACCOMMODATION WILL OCCUR. BUT APPARENT POWER OF PQ LINGUISTIC HARD LINERS, SOME OF WHOM APPEAR WILLING TO ACCEPT TRADE OFF OF DIMINISHED ECONOMIC PRESENCE FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF LINGUISTIC GOALS, CHANGES NORMAL RULES OF GAME AND MAY VITIATE ECONOMIC RATIONALE. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, BOTH COMPANIES AND PROVINCE COULD BE IN FOR LONG, ROCKY RIDE.
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